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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250-1340 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2616

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June 25, 1993



USDA's National Hunger Forum, held in Washington, D.C., June 17, was designed to help the Department develop a strategy to address the issue. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy, and Ellen Haas, assistant secretary for Food and Consumer Services, heard from more than 70 panelists. Espy said the government must look for links with the private sector in fighting hunger through economic development, health care, food assistance programs, nutrition education, and welfare reform. USDA photo by Byron Schumaker.

INCREASING FARM INCOME -- Commercialization of farm-based industrial products has the potential to increase market-driven demand for agricultural materials and improve the farm income picture. Vegetable oils, livestock by-products and starch crops, primarily corn, wheat and potatoes, are among the renewable agricultural materials that are currently turned into industrial products. Industrial uses of farm products are making a comeback as public concern about pollution and the environment has intensified and new technologies for processing agricultural material have become available. USDA has established over 350 agreements with private companies to develop discoveries made by government researchers and bring the results to market. Contact: Doug Beach (202) 219-0085.

FARM HOUSEHOLD INCOME -- Recent studies show that 25 percent of all farms in the U.S. produce 75 percent of all agricultural products. The studies also show that income earned away from the farm is very important to the economic well-being of these farm households. They earned only one-half of their total income from farming, an average of \$22,700 of the household income of \$43,600. For all farms the average total household income in 1991 was \$36,500 compared to the U.S. average household income of \$37,900. The average household income in 1991 from farm sources was \$4,000, down \$1,742 from 1990 totals. The figures show that successful rural economic development is key to the economic well-being of rural households. Contact: Bob McElroy (202) 219-0800.

MIDDLE EAST OIL PRICES & AG IMPORTS -- The close correlation between petroleum earnings in the Middle East and agricultural imports of the region has diminished sharply, and the central role of oil and gas prices is unlikely to regain its prominence. Revenues in the region have fluctuated, but food imports have continued an upward trend. U.S. exporters dominate the market for bulk commodities, while the EC is the leader in high-value products to the area. Last year U.S. exports increased 12 percent to \$3.2 billion. In the first quarter of 1993 U.S. agricultural exports to the region are 34 percent higher than the same period a year ago. Intense competition to U.S. exports comes from the EC, Canada, Southeast Asia, and Turkey. Contact: Michael Kurtzig (202) 219-0632.

DAIRY SUMMIT -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, conducted the nation's first dairy summit, June 17 in York, PA, to produce a national milk marketing strategy. Items discussed included the current situation facing dairy farmers and the industry, federal milk marketing orders, deregulation, exports, and the two-tier pricing plan. Contact: Tom Amontree (202) 720-4623.

FOOD PRICES UP SLIGHTLY -- During the first four months of 1993 the food component of the Consumer Price Index increased 1.7 percent, less than half the increase for all other goods and services. The Consumer Price Index for all food is expected to rise two to three percent in 1993. Much of the increase has already occurred due to weather-related supply disruptions in beef and vegetables in the first portion of the year. Contact: Cathy Greene (202) 219-0313.

READING FOOD LABELS -- The new label on food, required by the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act, can be a powerful tool to promote healthy eating. Teaching consumers how to read and use the new food label can empower consumers to make healthful choices. USDA has established the Food Labeling Education Information Center at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, MD. It encourages an exchange of information between public and private sectors on their food labeling education activities. Contact: Brian Norris (301) 344-3778.

OPTIONS STUDY -- One thousand farmers in three states have enrolled 20.5 million bushels of 1993 crop corn, wheat and soybeans in the Options Pilot Program. Producers in three counties in each of three states, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa, are learning about purchasing options contracts for their crops. The program is also studying the benefits that can be received from the contracts as compared to federal income and price supports for the commodities. Producer participation in the program exceeded expectations. In those counties where producers did not enroll maximum allocated quantities, the unused allocation was reallocated to other counties. The producers could enroll up to 50,000 bushels of corn and 15,000 bushels each of wheat and soybeans. Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.

WHEAT PRICES DOWN -- The 1993 wheat crop is expected to be the second largest since 1984. Supply is likely to increase and total use is expected to decrease, pushing prices down. Less wheat is likely to be exported, and more will be used for domestic feed instead of food. For the fourth time in 14 years, wheat prices for the 1993/94 crop year are expected to drop below \$3 per bushel. The low prices will encourage many producers to use the government's 9-month price-support loan program. If the market price trigger is met, the Secretary of Agriculture has the discretion to open the Farmer-Owned Reserve storage program. Contact: Robert Dismukes (202) 219-0313.

HELPING TO DIVERSIFY -- Twenty-three rural communities in 15 states will receive federal grants to study ways to diversify their economies. The funds, ranging from \$8,000 to \$30,000 each, are granted through USDA's Forest Service, and will go to communities whose economies depend solely on forest resources. The studies help communities find economic alternatives so they can have less dependence on a single resource such as timber harvesting, and identify the best option to expand their economic base. Contact: Linda Feldman (202) 205-1668.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1881 -- Gary Crawford presents and overview of the recent National Hunger Forum. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1363 -- Free trade and your fruit supply; be smart about finances; saving tomorrow's medicines; computerized landscaping; cookout costs. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1873 -- USDA News Highlights; growing taxol; recycling sludge; the top ten hit parade of export states; time capsule seeds. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1626 -- New gene protects plants; parsley packs a punch; cutting the cost of growing rice; dieting and metabolism; marvelous mayapple. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wednesday, June 30, planted acreage, grain stocks, China outlook, world coffee outlook, world tobacco outlook; Thursday, July 1, horticultural exports; Tuesday, July 6, ag prices annual summary, crop & weather update, cotton/wool update; Monday, July 12, U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand. These are the **USDA reports we know about in advance**. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on food safety, on the beach and at the campground; Pat O'Leary reports on 1992's top ten farm export states; Will Pemble reports on biodegradable products produced from cornstarch.

ACTUALITIES -- Norton Strommen, USDA chief meteorologist, with the weekly weather and crop update; USDA economist Verner Grise on U.S. tobacco production.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on farm broadcasting in Russia; Lynn Wyvill reports on vitamin E and the elderly; DeBoria Janifer reports on fresh produce in food banks.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

HEAVY FROST...in mid-June hit the potato crop hard, says **Bill Whittom** (Idaho Farm Times, Rupert, ID). Yield and quality will likely be affected at harvest. Dry beans are late getting in the ground because of cool temperatures and wetness. Producers are at the tail end of the window for planting. Bill says the opposite side of the moisture situation is that irrigation reservoirs are nearly full, ranchers are no longer hauling water to cattle, and the wildflowers are blooming again.

EXCELLENT CONDITIONS...for small grains development are reported by **Al Gustin** (KFYR, Bismarck, ND). If the situation continues big crops are expected. Al has been doing several stories on NAFTA and the experiences resulting from the U.S.- Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Producers in his state are expressing concern that problems could be magnified under NAFTA. Al is operating under "controlled chaos," his station's newsroom is being relocated in the building.

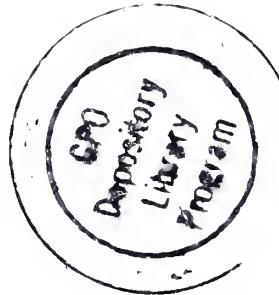
ALL WE NEED...is a good price and some rain, says **James Guthrie** (KFIN, Jonesboro, AR). Producers are busy combining wheat and planting beans.

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MID-YEAR MEETING...in Bozeman of the Montana Stock Growers Association was covered by **Rick Haines** (Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT). Rick says the group was setting policy positions to be considered at the national level on hot issues such as endangered species, land use and taxes. As NAFB western region VP, Rick is looking forward to greeting the 150 attendees registered for the regional meeting the last weekend in June at Red Lodge, MT. Meanwhile, **Taylor Brown**, was covering for the network the 30 competitors in the World Livestock Auctioneering Championships being conducted in Billings.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Max Molleston** (WKBF, Rock Island, IL). He won the Writer of the Year award presented by the Quad-City Writers Club. The award recognizes local authors who have helped writers in the Quad-City area. Max also writes poetry, and is president of Quint-City Poets.

TALK SAFETY...lets help get them through the season whole and healthy.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division